

lost elections during the ensuing decade and a half, but all the time kept growing in Charan Singh's esteem. So much so that in 1981, the Chaudhary, who had moved on to central politics, made him president of the UP Lok Dal. But that wasn't a good time to be in a non-Congress formation. The assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984 delivered an electoral windfall to the Congress, the opposition got decimated across the country. In UP, the Congress' sway was nearly total. Mulayam Singh Yadav could achieve nothing better than leading the little Opposition flock in the Assembly again. Three years later, when the Lok Dal split and he lost the leadership of Opposition to Ajit Singh's man, Satyapal Singh Yadav, he recoiled with a vengeance to form the Krantikari Morcha with the support of the Janata Party and the Left. With this began perhaps the most intense power struggle of Mulayam Singh's life — it was a battle to make his own space in UP politics, now that Chaudhary Charan Singh was gone. It was a battle not only against the newly-anointed Ajit Singh but also the tall shadow of his late mentor Chaudhary Charan Singh.

MULAYAM SINGH, shrewd tactician that he is, never once disowned the political legacy of Charan Singh, but fought his chosen legatee bitterly. He aligned with the other tall Jat of the time, Devi Lal, and worked his way up through him. For a time during the painfully long time the birth of the Janata Dal took, Mulayam Singh was torn between Devi Lal and Chandra Shekhar,



SINGH AND SINGH: Amar Singh is hated by the Mulayam crowd, but he is critical to Yadav

MULAYAM HAS A STRONG VOTE BANK AND A STRONGER MONEY-BANK, CRUCIAL IN A STATE WHERE HORSETRADING IS THE NORM

who were calling each other names over merging under VP Singh. But he played his cards cleverly, kept the confidence of both leaders, and once the Janata Dal was formally born, assumed unchallenged leadership of the party in UP with the blessings of the two giants. VP Singh wasn't too happy having MSY as head of the UP Janata Dal, but he had little choice — MSY had the backing of big party satraps.

There is a rather see-saw love-hate his-

tory to the VP-MSY relationship. They first crossed swords in the 1980-84 period when VP Singh was Congress chief minister of Uttar Pradesh and MSY was leader of Opposition. It was during this time that MSY came into his own, launching one roadshow after the other, running campaign rings around the state, making a one-man show of the UP Lok Dal. Among his major successes during this period was the agitation against repeated police excesses, including the controversial stripping of Maya Tyagi by policemen in Etah. VP would never forget how MSY had him and his government on the mat every other week. Much later, MSY, UP chief minister, would vie with VP Singh, prime minister, for wearing the Muslim messiah crown. Mulayam thought he should have been allowed to stop LK Advani's rathayatra; VP Singh did not want to give Mulayam the credit. He overruled him and gave the honour to his Bihar counterpart Laloo Yadav. Laloo could be Muslim mascot in Bihar, VP wanted the UP title for himself. Mulayam Singh felt robbed, especially since he had staked his government trying to save the Babri masjid. It is a grouse he has always lived with. And it's probably a moment of personal triumph for him that he lords over more Muslim support today than VP Singh, who is merely a fringe player in these elections. But then, there's Mayawati there, threatening to eat into his base and more. ▀

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FROM BAHUJAN TO SARVAJAN SAMAJ: THE BSP

- » In 2004, during the Lok Sabha polls, the BSP came first or second in as many as 224 Assembly segments. Its national vote-share is a whopping 21 percent
- » The BSP does not bring out manifestoes. Amongst Mayawati's promises are putting Mulayam Singh behind bars and quota for upper-caste poor
- » One of four Brahmins in India live in UP. At 23 percent, the state also has the largest dalit population in India.
- » Dalit voters don't mind the party's alliances with the BJP or its wooing of Brahmins as they see the BSP as being their own party.
- » Mayawati has been able to unite hitherto conflicting dalit communities such as Jatavs and Pasis. She is herself from the Jatav community which forms 2/3rds of the dalit population
- » Satish Chandra Mishra, a Brahmin, and Sudhir Goel, a Baniya, are the only BSP leaders allowed to give statements to the press
- » The BSP did not officially contest or campaign for the municipal polls in UP early this year, leaving the BJP to win most of the seats



DALIT CANDIDATES OF THE BSP HAVE MOSTLY BEEN GIVEN TICKETS ONLY ON THOSE SEATS THAT ARE RESERVED FOR THE SCHEDULED CASTES

Baniya-dominated BJP in particular, the BSP is now selling the slogan of a Sarvajan Samaj, a society for all.

Just like other parties, dalit candidates of the BSP have been given tickets in almost exclusively those seats that are Constitutionally reserved for the Scheduled Castes. 139 tickets have been given to upper caste candidates, 86 of them Brahmin.

In Western UP, efforts have been made to win over Jats and break into the base of Rashtriya Lok Dal leader Ajit Singh whose campaign for a separate Harit Pradesh has run out of steam. Muslims have been sent out mixed signals — given 61 seats along with some murmurs about Islamic fundamentalism in order to assure the Brahmins that unlike the SP, BSP leaders won't be found wearing skullcaps and breaking bread with clerics. Although still largely with the SP, Muslims prefer to vote tactically in favour of the candidate most likely to win in order to defeat the BJP. The BSP's Bahujan experiment has failed; the results on May 11 will tell whether its Sarvajan experiment succeeds.

That doesn't mean the OBCs are not being wooed — a good 110 seats have been given to them. Kanshi Ram used to scoff at reservations, saying that Bahujans should capture power and give reservations to the minority savarnas. What

seemed like bravado rather than rhetoric just might come true. Mayawati has been promising quotas for the upper-caste poor. She's serious.

The sorry state of law and order, which everyone except the Samajwadi Party admits is a result of "Yadavisation" of the state administration, is being used by the BSP as the chief plank to capitalise on the anti-incumbency factor that runs high. Voters across caste and religion are being told that the choice is between the SP and the BSP.

A whole new political realm might open up in what otherwise seems a stagnant identity politics in post-Mandal north India. But some things won't change: there will be criminal cases against SP leaders and harsh disciplinary measures against officials seen not to be obedient. Ranging from the constable to the senior-most IAS officers, everyone will line up before ministers requesting to be transferred or to not be transferred. Nobody does as many transfers as Mayawati does. After all, mammon is the god of electoral politics.

The state treasury will again be strained for funds for the benefit of different sections of society, and the establishment of a Sarvajan Samaj would require more crumbs to be thrown than ever before. After all, the benefits have to be tangible if an election has to be fought five years later, or even sooner. So what happens to the other BSP, *bijli, sadak, pani?* Wait for Behenji to establish the Sarvajan Samaj, will you?

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